



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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February 5, 2015

Dear Chairmen, Senator Crisco, Representative Megna and distinguished members of the Insurance Committee

I'm submitting testimony on a bill I introduced, **H.B. 5259, "An Act Expanding Health Insurance Coverage for Mental Health or Nervous Conditions"**.

After the tragedy in Newtown, most people turned their attention toward the mental health community for answers. Like me, most people learned the issue was complicated and is a series of challenges faced by people with mental illness and their families.

I spent time attending NAMI meetings and meetings with families and caregivers. I learned a lot about the failures of the system of insurance coverage. The maze of trying to obtain help for mental illness is overwhelming.

60 minutes did an enlightening piece in December that showed how deadly these failures can be for people with mental illness and their families. I urge members of the committee to watch the CBS episode, link included, to see how glaringly broken insurance coverage for mental health is for individuals in our state and across our country. I was heartbroken when I heard from families in my district and angry when I watched the episode on 60 Minutes.

We need to do better, we can do better.

60 Minutes: Here's the Full Story

By Bob Carolla, NAMI Director of Media Relations

On Jan. 26, CBS News' 60 Minutes aired "Nowhere to Go: Mentally Ill Youth in Crisis," an important story that has helped raise attention to failures in the mental health care system affecting young people and their families.

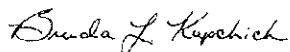
The full story includes an interview with a young man in an emergency room who had been experiencing suicidal ideation and a frank discussion with a group of mothers.

The centerpiece, however, is an interview with Virginia state senator and former gubernatorial candidate Creigh Deeds, whose 24-year-old son, Gus attacked him and then died by suicide in Nov. 2013. The tragedy involved a prominent politician and his son, but could just as easily have happened to anyone.

Gus, who lived with bipolar disorder, had been discharged from a hospital emergency room the day before the tragedy because no psychiatric beds were available in the local or nearby communities. "I really don't want Gus to be defined by his illness," declares Senator Deeds in the interview. "I don't want Gus to be defined by what happened...Gus was a great kid. He was a perfect son. It's clear the system failed."

http://www.cbs.com/shows/60_minutes/video/hgl_QJ16XzzVdGowdUv9cakKztPC_hHG/nowhere-to-go-mentally-ill-youth-in-crisis/

I appreciate the committee's time and consideration.



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